

vast indifference of death. All is dust and ashes—except

to remember, to understand, and to create.

Almost all philosophies seem very odd; but few odder than Proust's. It is a string for his pearls; but does its author really deserve our awed respect as a philosopher;

even if he was related by marriage to Bergson? Is it not comparable with the philosophical thimble-rigging on

which Signor Pirandello has built a whole series of intriguing plays? One of the first things, surely, in 'Knowing Oneself' is to know when to stop; as, long before

Proust, Hamlet failed to know. We need not rush to the opposite extreme with Remy de Gourmont, crying that

le "Gnothi Seauton" est peut-etre la sotrise la plus dele-

tere qui fut jamais proferee'. But even if both matter

and personality seem to slip like phantoms through our

fingers, when analysed beyond a certain degree of minute-

ness, life still has to be conducted at all events as if both

material bodies and personalities, mutual love and friend-

ship did exist. It can be. After all, we do often successfully

predict the behaviour of people, even people we love;

and the power to predict remains the best test we have

that we are not mistaking fancy for fact. It is not Dorothy

Osborne writing to Temple, or Montaigne writing of

Etienne de la Boetie, who seem to the reader unreal

dreamers, but Proust himself. He is inconsistent. He will

talk of the impossibility of all human

contacts; yet he
does not question the reality of his relations
with his
grandmother, who corresponds in his book
to his mother
in real life. He will complain that though the
mistresses
who kissed him good-night could calm him
by it as Bis
mother once had done, yet he could not
trust them as he
had trusted her; he does not suggest that it
was a mere
illusion to have trusted her. He is capable, in
his muddled
idealism, of saying on one page that only
ideas exist—